



# CAMBRIDGE HISTORICAL COMMISSION

831 Massachusetts Avenue, 2<sup>nd</sup> Fl., Cambridge, Massachusetts 02139

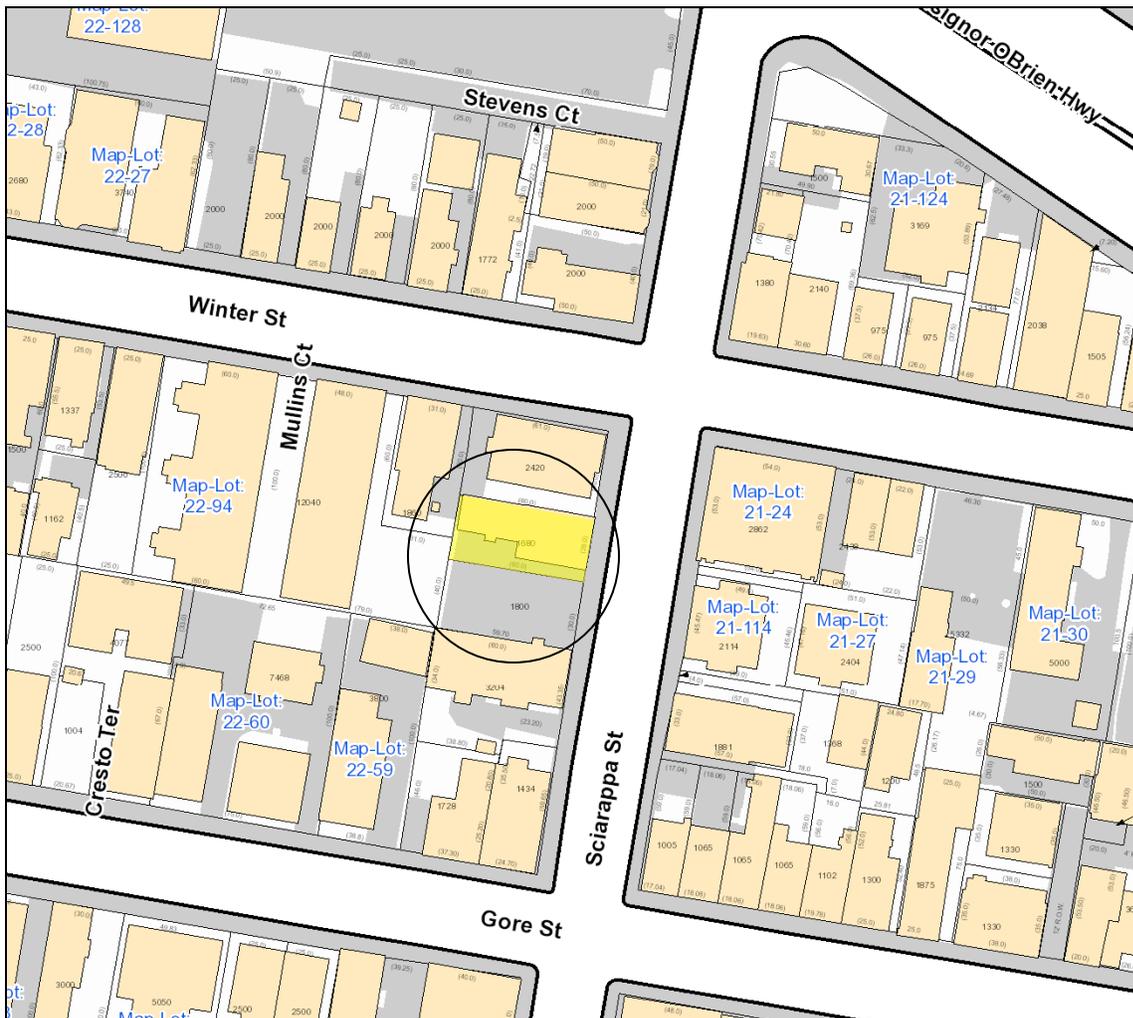
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Date: November 23, 2011  
To: Members of the Historical Commission  
From: Sarah Burks, Preservation Planner  
Re: D-1250: 21 Sciarappa Street (Daniel Lehan House)

An application to demolish the house at 21 Sciarappa Street was received on November 4, 2011. The applicant, 21 Sciarappa LLC, was notified of an initial determination of significance, and a public hearing was scheduled for December 1.



Case D-1250: 21 Sciarappa Street

City of Cambridge GIS, 11/23/11

## Site

The house is located on the west side of Sciarappa Street near the corner of Winter Street. Constructed in 1854, this 2½-story, two-family house has been enveloped in artificial siding, which obscures its original details. It is situated on a lot of 1,680 square feet that is located in a C-1 zone. This residential zone allows single to multi-family dwellings with a .75 FAR limit, 35-foot height limit, and a density of 1,500 square feet per dwelling unit. The assessed value for the land and buildings (Map 22/Parcel 55), according to the online Assessor's database, was \$403,300.

Most of the buildings in this neighborhood have gable roofs facing gable end to the street or flat roofs, such as on three-deckers and larger apartment and institutional buildings. Photographs of the streetscape are provided below. The adjacent building at 60 Winter Street, formerly a 1-story concrete block garage, has recently had a modern addition constructed on the roof and is identified as a single-family residence in the Assessor's database.



Sciarappa St. looking north from Gore St.



Sciarappa St. looking south from Winter St.

## Condition

From the exterior, the house appears to be in overall good condition. The roof appears sound and the parged foundation of the front block of the house appears in fair condition. No interior inspection was made.

The applicant proposes to demolish the existing house and replace it with a larger multi-family dwelling on the combined lot with 23 Sciarappa (Map 22/Parcel 56), which is under common ownership. The existing house does not conform to zoning setback requirements. The structure fills the lot, leaving virtually no front, side, or rear setbacks. Twenty-three Sciarappa Street has been a vacant lot since 1965.

## Architectural Description

The frame house at 21 Sciarappa Street, which was constructed in 1854, is of the side-hall plan. Side-hall houses were built in all configurations, as single houses, doubles, and rows, and are characterized by a three-bay facade with the entry on one side. This type of house plan originated in the Federal period and continued to be built in all current styles until the 1930s; the common three-decker also followed this basic plan.



21 Sciarappa St., Assessor's photo



21 Sciarappa St, view of south wall of front block and ell. Photo by S. Burks, November 23, 2011.

Twenty-one Sciarappa Street is a 2½-story house with a gable roof; it has a 2-story ell. The front block of the house measures approximately 21' wide by 31.5' deep and the ell measures approximately 14' wide by 20' deep. The house sits on a raised brick foundation.

The house's fenestration is symmetrical on the front wall, with the exception of the window over the entry, which has been shortened, probably for a bathroom. The windows on the side walls are not as evenly arranged. A large bowed picture window has replaced two double hung windows on the first floor of the south wall. The windows were originally 2-over-2 double-hung sash throughout, but have since been replaced with white vinyl or aluminum windows, mostly in a 1-over-1 sash arrangement.

The entry is located in the right bay of the front wall, and is deeply recessed. The recessed entry is characteristic in the East Cambridge neighborhood. The door has been replaced in the mid twentieth century. The front steps are made of wood. Though long covered with artificial siding (first asphalt shingles and then vinyl), the massing of the house, size and placement of the windows, and projection of the eaves indicates that this house was built during the transition from the Greek Revival style to the Bracketed Italianate.



21 Sciarappa Street, survey photo, March 1970.

### History

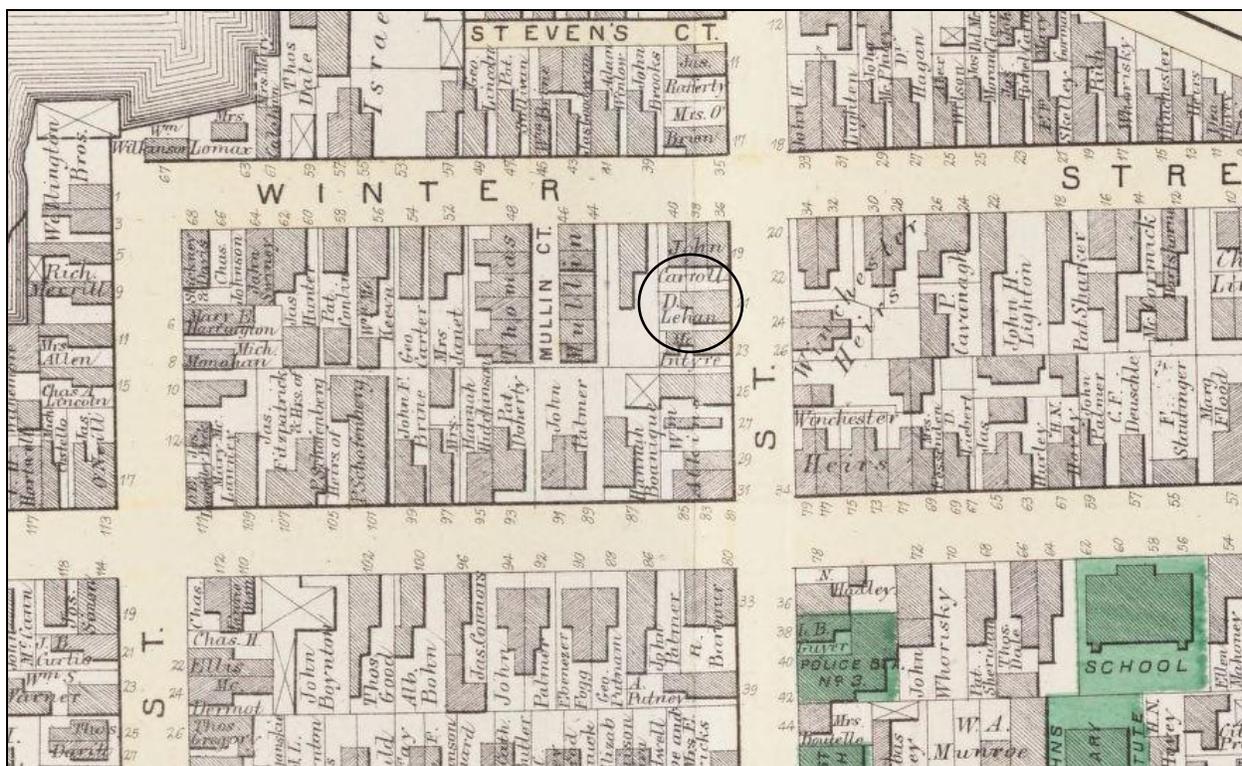
East Cambridge originated as a speculative real estate development at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. A grid of streets was laid out on the salt-marsh island known as Lechmere's Point, and residential construction began near the top of the hill along Otis and Thorndike Streets. Early industry developed along the Miller's River north of East Cambridge, and the marshes south and west of the neighborhood remained undeveloped until after the Civil War.

Much of the development of East Cambridge was undertaken by corporations and trusts, rather than individuals. Andrew Craigie, the speculator who conceived of East Cambridge

and who secretly purchased much of the Lechmere estate, soon organized the Lechmere Point Corporation as a means of attracting other investors. The expense of filling large tracts of marsh land and building streets and utilities was beyond the resources of most individuals, and companies such as the Canal Bridge Corporation and the Cambridge Wharf Company undertook these projects with varying success in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Fourth Street was first laid out in 1811 between Winter Street and Charles Street. The street was renamed Sciarappa Street in the late 1940s in memory of Private Nicholas Sciarappa, an East Cambridge resident killed in action in France during World War II.

The lot at 21 Sciarappa Street was purchased by Daniel Lehan, a blacksmith, who constructed the house in 1854 and was its first resident. By 1894, the property had passed to Mary E. Morrisey and then again to Felix O'Neil by 1916. O'Neil was a laborer, according to city directories.



Detail of 1873 Hopkins Atlas of Cambridge, plate Q.

### Significance and Recommendation

The house at 21 Sciarappa Street is significant as a representative example of a mid nineteenth-century side-hall house, a characteristic house type in the East Cambridge neighborhood. The house's form and placement on the lot contributes to the rhythm and pattern of the streetscape. It is the staff recommendation that the house be found significant for these reasons. The house also has significance for its associations with the social history of Cambridge and the commercial and immigrant history of the East Cambridge neighborhood.

It is the staff recommendation that the Commission review the applicant's proposal and hear public testimony from the neighborhood before making a further determination.

cc: Ranjit Singanayagam, Inspectional Services Commissioner  
21 Sciarappa Street LLC